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SPEECH OF HON. A. A. SARGENT.

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S P E E C H
O F
HON. AARON A. SARGENT,
1827-1887.
OF CALIFORNIA,

ON THE
PACIFIC RAILROAD
AS A MILITARY NECESSITY.

DELIVERED IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
JANUARY 31, 1862.

WASHINGTON:
PRESS OF GEO. C. RAND & AVERY.
1862.

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S P E E C H

OF

HON. AARON A. SARGENT.

The House being in Committee of the Whole on the State of the Union, Mr. SARGENT, of California, arose and said:—

MR. CHAIRMAN:—

I did not rise for the purpose of discussing the slavery question in any of its aspects. Sufficient time has been abstracted from the deliberations of the House, on both sides of this chamber, to lead to results upon that matter. Although I have settled convictions upon the duty of Congress and the Executive in the disposal of that question which has disturbed our international relations for half a century, and finally involved us in a disastrous war, I prefer to express those convictions by my votes upon the pending measures, and to use the hour accorded to me by the courtesy of the committee in the presentation of my views of a matter which has heretofore, at this session, been neglected in both Houses, and in which the interests and safety of my constituents, the continuance of our Pacific Empire, and the good name of the nation are involved. I shall treat the question as not one of local importance, for the whole country is interested in our action upon it, and the whole country must suffer by our supineness.

Sir, one year ago this House, after full consideration, passed a bill for the construction of a railroad and telegraph line from the valley of the Mississippi to the Pacific, for the reasons, as indicated in the title of the bill, that military and other purposes of public interest were subserved thereby. The vote by which that bill was passed was the consummation of a long struggle in this House, upon one side of which were arrayed the progressive, far-seeing men of the country, representing constituencies controlling large capital, and anxious for the inauguration of this great national measure. Energy, wisdom, and patriotism distinguished the efforts of the men who fought for this great object through many stormy debates in Congress. Upon the other side were ranged in stolid oppo-

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sition the men who ever hang upon the wheels of progress ; those who delay enterprises of great pith and moment by scruples concerning powers and minor expediencies ; the men who could discern constitutional power to indefinitely expand the territory of the Union, but none for its improvement ; the men who were governed by local prejudices more than by considerations of general good. Sectional prejudice, rival routes and schemes, timidity, indifference, all weighed in the scale, and delayed the consummation for many a weary year achieved by that vote passing a Pacific railroad bill.

Sir, the result was hailed with delight in my own State, and in the great commercial centers generally, too soon turned to disappointment by the ultimate failure of the measure through the less progressive action of the Senate. To-day this great work is not further advanced, so far as Congress is concerned, than it was at the date of the passage of that bill. Although both Houses are now filled with the avowed friends of the measure, it almost seems as if its fate would be to be betrayed with a kiss. I now conceive it my duty — representing, as I do, a people whose safety, perhaps their power to remain a part of this Union, depends upon it — to speak plainly upon it, to arouse this House from its inaction, and convince it, if I am able, that this railroad is a necessity of the times — a great war measure — to be inaugurated *now*, if regard is to be paid to the most vital interests of the country. I would that this task had fallen to abler hands. I have waited patiently for nearly two months for some experienced member to rise in his place and resume the discussion, and urge action. I have waited in vain, and must, perforce, undertake the onerous task.

Before, however, I proceed to speak upon the necessity of the immediate action of Congress in favor of this great work, I wish to direct the attention of the House to the pledges that have heretofore been made for its speedy construction. The Pacific railroad has been a subject of so great interest and such acknowledged importance, that it has been incorporated into the platform of each party at every Presidential election since 1852, and has often been the subject of special recommendations from the Presidents to Congress. Does this mean nothing ? Is it a settled policy to acknowledge its necessity before and ignore its usefulness after a Presidential election ? Are our Presidents insincere in their recommendations ? our party platforms ingenious deceptions ? our pledges to the people studied falsehoods ? Are not the promises under which a great party seeks to assume the reins of power made in good faith ? *A pledge made under these circumstances becomes a responsibility when that party succeeds to power.* The Democratic party, which long administered the Government, the cardinal doctrines of whose creed were opposed to works of internal improvement, were compelled by the justice and great importance of this measure, and by the demands of the people, to change their views, and find authority within the Constitution whereby this Government could legally extend its aid toward the construction of this work. The Republican party has always asserted such authority, and been foremost in its declarations in favor of its immediate inauguration by the di-

rect aid of the national Treasury. And, to my mind, there is no question of constitutional right involved in this case. The Constitution speaks plainly. It confers upon Congress the power to declare war, to raise and support armies, and to repel invasion.

The admission of new States or Territories into the Union necessarily involves new duties and responsibilities upon the parent Government. All are mutually interested in the welfare, protection, and perpetuity of the Union. No distinctions or preferences can be shown; no duties or responsibilities evaded on account of locality. The States and Territories are each and all entitled alike to the support and protection of that Union of which they form a part, and whose perpetuity they guaranty to defend and uphold. It is clearly the imperative duty of the Congress of the United States, therefore, to assume the responsibilities imposed by the Constitution, and grant to the several States the protection they need, and which they justly claim as a constitutional right. Under the authority to declare war and repel invasion, Congress has the undisputed power to assume the construction of any work of public utility or necessity which the exigencies of war may demand. We may build fortifications or military roads; we may authorize the raising of an army, and must provide for the support of that army. We have power to transport that army, and hence to provide the means for its transportation; and if this transportation involves the necessity of cutting, making, or building roads of any description, it is not only our right but our duty to build them.

Then, sir, if there be no question as to the powers of Congress, let us inquire as to its duties in relation to this matter.

Between the Atlantic coast and the western verge of the valley of the Mississippi was but lately contained the wealth, power, and influence of this great Republic. Until after the Mexican war, the entire country lying still further west to the Pacific was a vast territory, nearly uninterrupted wilderness, sparsely settled, and of which little was known. Our only possession on the Pacific coast was Oregon Territory, the home of a few thousand of our citizens, and the trade of which was comparatively unimportant. British America and the Russian possessions occupied the territory north to Behring Straits, while Mexico and a few minor states were in the possession of the coast to the Isthmus of Panama. As a result of that war the new territory of California and New Mexico was added to our possessions, comprehending a line of sea-coast extending from the thirty-fifth to the forty-second parallel of north latitude, equal in extent to the entire Atlantic sea-board from Maine to Florida. Almost simultaneously with the acquisition of this territory were discovered the extensive gold regions of the Sierra Nevadas, the result of which has been the influx of population into this new country unparalleled in the annals of history. Within the past twelve years a steady stream of immigration has poured into those new possessions by every available route. Steamers and sailing vessels have left our commercial marts crowded with our fellow-citizens seeking a new home on the furthest confines of our western possessions; long trains of emigrant wagons, accompanied by the wives and children of hardy pioneers of the Western States, have taken up the

line of march for a home still further west, until, at the present time, a population of over half a million souls are pursuing their daily avocations upon the shores of the Pacific. Cities, towns, and villages have sprung into existence as if by magic. Steamers plow our seas, and shipping from every part of the world crowd our ports and line our wharves. The steady tide of gold of over \$500,000,000 which has during the past twelve years flowed from thence to benefit the older States of the Atlantic slope, fully attests the energy and industry of the citizens of the Pacific.

Sir, it is these people who earnestly demand, through us, their congressional Representatives, to be heard upon the great questions which affect their welfare. The States of California and Oregon are realities. They are legitimate members of this great family. They are ever ready and willing to fulfill their duties and obligations to the parent Government. They are true, loyal, and patriotic. They will lay down their lives and pour out their treasure in support of this glorious Union. In the State which I have the honor in part to represent, they have battled nobly to overthrow the chivalric dynasty which has so long sat like an incubus upon the breast of their Government—that factious oligarchy, whose Southern sympathies and secession tendencies were the more dangerous as they were sought to be concealed under the specious names of anti-commerce, peace policy, Pacific Republic, &c. They have bravely vindicated their love for the Union by striking down, as I believe, forever, that insidious foe, at the late election. And they claim to be heard at this Congress upon the subject of their necessities by the mouth of their chosen and honored Representatives. Their great want is action; *action* on the subject of a railroad communication with the Atlantic States.

The position of the people of California, and of the whole Pacific coast, in the event of a war with any maritime power, is an unenviable one. We are not situated as are our sister States of the Atlantic slope. The Eastern States possess within themselves elements of power and self-reliance which will enable them to sustain themselves in time of either peace or war. Their line of sea-coast, their lakes and maritime cities, are protected by defensive fortifications, which can secure them from invasion. Their fields of mineral wealth, of iron and coal, are already developed, and they will find their usual markets through the channels of communication which have already been made, and which a foreign war cannot close. Their manufacturing establishments are sufficiently extensive and varied to enable them to manufacture within themselves every article which their necessities may require. The great garden and storehouse of the West, which has hitherto supplied food not only for the consumption of the Atlantic States, but for the needy millions of foreign countries, will be open still, and will be drawn upon only for the support of the people of those States. The network of railroads and canals, whose ramifications pervade and extend to every part of the country, will still continue in operation, and afford their customary facilities for the transportation of public and private stores and goods, still be available for the purposes of Government, in rapidly concentrating its troops at any required point.

But how is it with us? Members of the same Confederation, we are more distant from our mother land than is India from the British Isles. In case of a foreign war, we possess neither the power nor means to successfully defend ourselves from the assaults of our foes. The Isthmus route, now available and open, will then be closed. Our only water communication will be via Cape Horn, a journey of over fifteen thousand miles, requiring from four to five months to make the passage in clipper ships, and this assailable by the enemy's vessels its whole length. Even supposing a vessel fortunate enough to escape the attentions of the enemy's cruisers on the Atlantic, she must then run the gauntlet of the Pacific; and on arriving at San Francisco, how will she pass the enemy's blockading fleet? No, sir; the first result of a foreign war will be the entire destruction of our commerce. We are confined like the fox in his hole, unable to advance or retreat.

It is true that we now raise breadstuffs enough to supply our wants. But if the enemy once obtain a foothold upon our soil, from the peculiar position of our agricultural lands, which lie within the great inland valleys of the Sacramento and the San Joaquin, the operations of the husbandman would soon be destroyed. The physical formation of the State of California is peculiar. Its western shore is washed by the waters of the Pacific ocean, and presents, with but few exceptions, a rugged, rock-bound coast. Two ranges of mountains traverse the State parallel with the general line of coast—the Sierra Nevada on the east, and the Coast Range on the west, which borders upon and forms a barrier to the Pacific ocean. These ranges run together in the northern and southern portions of the State, leaving between them a large valley from thirty to fifty miles in width, and about four hundred miles long, called the Sacramento valley on the north, and the San Joaquin valley on the south. The Coast Range is pierced about midway by the Golden Gate, immediately within which lies the harbor or bay of San Francisco, upon which is situated the city and port of San Francisco, the commercial center of California, and of the Pacific coast, where all ships come, and where all cargoes are unloaded. The Sacramento river flowing southwardly, and the San Joaquin flowing northwardly, are the grand avenues of communication with the interior of the State; and all goods, merchandise, &c., arriving at, and not consumed in, San Francisco, find their way to the interior through these channels.

These two rivers are connected at a point about fifty miles above San Francisco, and flowing through a single channel, enter the head of the bay of San Francisco through Carquines straits, about twenty-five miles north of San Francisco. The bay of San Francisco is about sixty miles long, by ten miles in width, extending southerly about forty, and northerly about twenty, miles from San Francisco.

The agricultural lands lie in this great valley of the Sacramento and San Joaquin, pierced by the rivers thus named, while on the western slope of the Sierra Nevada is carried on the mining operations, and there reside three fourths of the population of California, all of whom are dependent upon San Francisco and the valleys for their supplies.

It will be well to bear in mind that the Sierra Nevadas are in winter time uninhabited above an elevation of about four thousand feet above the sea, on account of the snow.

Now, what would be the position of California in the event of a war with a foreign maritime power? The first stroke would be a blockade of the harbor of San Francisco, the result of which would be the entire destruction of our commerce, and consequently a complete paralyzation of business. Our commerical intercourse with the outward world would be completely annihilated. What follows? The prices of every article of food, clothing, usefulness, or luxury, would leap suddenly upwards to starvation rates. Sir, the people of the Atlantic States do not understand what high prices mean with us. Prices with us depend upon the foreign supply; and many a needy man, in the early days of California, when the ocean was free, and ships were arriving day by day with full cargoes of provisions, has had to pay his two hundred dollars per barrel for flour, and a dollar a pound for bacon! How will it be when a blockade of San Francisco shuts the door to all future supplies? when every holder knows that his stock on hand cannot be replenished? God forbid that I shall ever live to see that day! You of the Atlantic States will never be compelled, by the exigencies of war, to cry out for bread. You will never realize the miseries of Antwerp, for your granary is at hand, and will always be full and inaccessible to your enemies. But where are the half million of California to procure their bread? We have sent relief to the suffering, starving poor of Ireland. Who will send relief to the starving men, women, and children of California? Be your intentions ever so good, be your sympathies ever so great, be your supplies ever so adequate, who will undertake to convey those supplies to them, and how will they reach them?

It may be said that a blockade of the harbor of San Francisco will not prevent the agriculturist from pursuing his labors in the fields and valleys, and that there we must look for supplies. Let no one deceive himself with that idea. I have spoken of this blockade as the first blow which will probably be struck. The next will be a forced entrance into San Francisco bay. It is not to be conceived that a powerful enemy will be content with simply blockading the port of San Francisco. California is too rich a prize to lose by inaction, and history teaches that the first-class powers of Europe do not despise the acquisition of valuable territory. They are not neglectful of any favorable opportunity to add to those wide dominions on which the sun never sets.

Let us see what are the inducements to a campaign for conquest. We have there in the center of the Pacific coast a port and harbor hardly equaled by that of any other country on the globe; a noble bay, stretching away, as I have said, forty miles to the southward, and twenty to the northward, completely land-locked, in which the navies of the world might ride in safety. This harbor, accessible only by a narrow entrance, and forming the key which unlocks or locks the inland navigation to a rich valley four hundred miles in length and fifty in width—the key which holds possession of the richest mining territory of gold and silver

in the known world, whose annual yield of the precious metals is not far short of \$100,000,000—a territory which employs a half a million of people in its development; a magnificent city of nearly one hundred thousand inhabitants lying at its entrance, with its wharves and docks, its custom-house and mint, its costly public buildings and private dwellings; commanding this entrance are a system of fortifications on which millions of dollars have been expended, and which, when fully completed, under the supervision of a great Power which was determined to make them such, could be made as impregnable as the rock of Gibraltar.

At the head of this noble bay our enemy would find to tempt him a capacious navy-yard, replete with every modern convenience and appliance necessary for his purposes; a dry-dock within which to repair his ships; an arsenal; barracks for his soldiers; in short, everything necessary to enable him to maintain his position, all built and ready fitted to his hand. Holding these, he holds California; he holds the Pacific coast; he holds the gold and silver of the mountains; he holds the commercial center of the Pacific—the great mart of trade, the growing, glorious empire of the West, the pride of the Union, and its earnest, faithful adherent. Are these advantages which a grasping, powerful enemy would scorn to possess himself of? Is not this a prize worthy ambition? Will you expose your jewels to every thief, and then stupidly wonder that they are stolen?

But I hear it said that our fortifications will protect this entrance. They will protect it against any ordinary assailant; but let me warn the gentlemen who lay that flattering unction to their souls that it was also said that Sebastopol could not be taken, and yet it fell. A mistaken economy in refusing to purchase a strip of ground has prevented the completion of the full system of fortifications designed to protect the entrance, and they are yet incomplete. Alcatraz and Fort Point cannot protect that harbor. You may pile Ossa on Pelion at those points; as long as a fort of commensurate strength is wanting on Lime Point the harbor is indefensible. But the best fortifications would avail nothing if the garrisons were cut off from supplies of ammunition or food.

Our enemy in possession of this harbor, of these fortifications, of the navy-yard, of the dry-dock, and arsenal, and in command of the inland navigation, what could the people of California do without cannon or ammunition, and without the means of procuring them? How could they protect themselves? Sir, they would have a choice of evils—starvation, surrender to foreign domination, or an exodus across the Sierras. I am no alarmist, nor do I desire to add one jot or tittle to the embarrassments under which our beloved country is now laboring. But I believe I speak the words of sober truth when I say that had the late Trent imbroglio not admitted of a peaceful solution; had the views and convictions of many of my friends and associates on this floor been sustained by a warlike answer to the demands of Great Britain, or a refusal to deliver up the persons of the confederate ambassadors, that to-day, even as we sit here, this first blow would have been struck, and the harbor of San Francisco sealed.

Sir, I have said that three evils would present themselves to the people of California. I cannot bear to think of the deep disgrace and disaster to our country implied in the loss of its Pacific States, to think that my noble State may be the appendage of a distant monarchy. I believe the other alternative would be accepted by my people — that they would flee from such disgrace ; and if the time does ever come and finds us all unprepared, as now we are unprepared, to meet the emergency, there will be witnessed an exodus from the Pacific coast which will be ever memorable in the history of nations — such an emigrant train as never before wended its way across this continent. It will travel eastward, and its course will be marked for centuries to come by the whitened bones of thousands of men, women, and children, whose last earthly cry was bread. Fleeing from a war against which they had no defense, from starvation amid inhospitable mountains, they would fall and die in the wilderness. Would you bid them submit ? Sir, I know the gallant hearts of my people. I know that many thousands would contest inch by inch with the invading foe ; that they would fight and conquer could they but be fed and be supplied with weapons. You need no standing army in California, aside from small trained garrisons in the forts, if you can furnish its hardy sons with the means of war. But these not to be obtained, they would be driven back and starved out till they surrendered or fled, and California be lost to the Union. Think you a treaty would restore it ? Go make a treaty with the vulture ! But even if a treaty would restore it, would you deserve the adhesion of California when you left it a defenceless prey to covetous enemies ? *No, sir ; once lost, it is lost forever.*

Sir, I have said that it is the duty of wise statesmanship to legislate for the future as well as for the present. We cannot lift the veil which shrouds the events of another year ; but it is our duty to use the experience of the past in determining our course in the future.

But a little over a year ago all was sunshine with us. If any member of this House had risen in his seat only two short years ago and predicted the events of the now past year as they have occurred, he would have been deemed a visionary or a madman. Had he told us that a rebellion would be inaugurated so powerful as to require the organization of an army of half a million of men to quell it, would he have been believed ? Had he told us that our capital would be beleaguered by an armed rebel force of two hundred thousand men ; that brother would be arrayed against brother, and father against son ; that all the terrible implements and enginery of warfare would be brought into requisition for purposes of destruction ; that fleets more powerful than ever sailed the seas before would depart from our shores to assail our then fellow-citizens — had he told us of bloody battles, and disgraceful retreats, and recounted the sufferings of prisoners — had he told us that two of our then honorable Senators would become traitors and rebels to this Government, and as such would be taken by a war vessel belonging to this Government as they were proceeding on their way as emissaries and ambassadors of a rebel government to purchase vessels, arms, and munitions of war, and to invoke the

aid of foreign Governments to assist in our overthrow ; that their detention by us would result in a war with England, would he not have been suspected of idle dreaming or willful folly ? Yet all this, and more, has occurred ; and to-day we are trying to provide means to pay or secure to be paid a debt of \$1,000,000,000 on account of this war, of which we have but just commenced the first campaign.

This is why, I repeat, it is the duty of wise statesmanship to provide for the future. We know that we are passing through a fiery ordeal. We have just escaped the brink of a precipice, the horrors of a war with the most powerful nation on the earth ; a war which, while it would affect the Atlantic States disastrously, would have brought total ruin and desolation to the inhabitants of the Pacific coast, unless they threw themselves without resistance into the arms of the foreign foe.

It is the right of those people to ask, it is the duty of Congress to provide, means of protection ; and we believe that protection is best afforded, can, in fact, be only afforded by the immediate construction of a railroad connecting the Atlantic States with those of the Pacific. If we are expected to repel invasion, we must be provided with the necessary means. We must have vast storehouses in which to gather grain, food, and clothing sufficient for many years. We must have an accumulation of ordnance, ammunition, and *materiel* of war sufficient to maintain a five-years' war if necessary, or we must have a railroad over which to transport these supplies. I believe it is conceded that any attempt to undertake the transportation of these supplies and stores by wagons across the Territories is idle. In support of this statement I may be permitted to quote from the report of the Secretary of War upon the Pacific railroad surveys during the administration of Mr. Pierce — the then honorable Jefferson Davis — now the military commander of the forces in armed rebellion against this Government. While I, in common with all lovers of the Union, can scarcely find words to express my abhorrence of the recent acts of this rebel chief, yet, in the present disposition of his armies and forces, we find abundant proof of his military sagacity and of the truth of his observations that I shall quote. He is now maintaining positions which but for railroads would be utterly untenable. He is practically illustrating the general truth of his argument upon the necessity of railroad facilities for military transportation ; and I call upon gentlemen here to controvert the truth of these statements and arguments if they can. He says :

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" The facts developed by these surveys, added to other information which we possess, suggest some considerations of great interest with regard to our territory on the Pacific. They exhibit it as a narrow slope of an average width of less than one hundred and fifty miles of cultivable land, skirting the ocean for a distance of a thousand miles, rich in those mineral productions which are tempting even beyond their value, and which would be most readily turned to the use of an invader ; drained by two rivers of wide-spread branches, and with seaports lying so directly upon the ocean that a hostile fleet could commence an attack upon any one of them within a few hours after being despatched from land ; or, if fortified against attack, so few in number that comparatively few ships would suffice to blockade them.

" This territory is not more remote from the principal European States than from those

parts of our own country whence it would derive its military supplies; and some of those States have colonies and possessions on the Pacific, which would greatly facilitate their operations against it. With these advantages, and those which the attacking force always has of choice of time and place, an enemy possessing a considerable military marine could, with comparatively little cost to himself, subject us to enormous expenses in giving to our Pacific frontier that protection which it is the duty of the General Government to afford.

"In the first years of a war with any great maritime Power the communication by sea could not be relied upon for the transportation of supplies from the Atlantic to the Pacific States. Our naval peace establishment would not furnish adequate convoys for the number of store-ships which it would be necessary to employ; and store-ships alone, laden with supplies, could not undertake a voyage of twenty thousand miles, passing numerous neutral ports, where an enemy's armed vessels, even of the smallest size, might lie in wait to intercept them.

"The only line of communication, then, would be overland; and by this it would be impracticable, with any means heretofore used, to furnish the amount of supplies required for the defense of the Pacific frontier. At the present prices over the best part of this route, the expense of land transportation alone, for the annual supplies of provisions, clothing, camp equipage, and ammunition for such an army as it would be necessary to maintain there, would exceed \$20,000,000; and to maintain troops and carry on defensive operations under those circumstances, the expense per man would be six times greater than it is now; the land transportation of each field twelve-pounder, with a due supply of ammunition for one year, would cost \$2,500; of each twenty-four-pounder and ammunition, \$9,000; and of a sea-coast gun and ammunition, \$12,000. The transportation of ammunition for a year for a thousand sea-coast guns would cost \$10,000,000. But the cost of transportation would be vastly increased by a war; and at the rates that were paid on the northern frontier during the last war with Great Britain, the above estimates would be trebled. The time required for the overland journey would be from four to six months. In point of fact, however, supplies for such an army could not be transported across the continent. On the arid and barren belts to be crossed the limited quantities of water and grass would soon be exhausted by the numerous draught animals required for heavy trains, and over such distances forage could not be carried for their subsistence.

"On the other hand, the enemy would send out his supplies at from one seventh to one twentieth the above rates, and in less time—perhaps in one fourth the time—if he could obtain command of the Isthmus route.

"Any reliance, therefore, upon furnishing that part of our frontier with means of defense from the Atlantic and interior States, after the commencement of hostilities, would be vain; and the next resource would be to accumulate there such amount of stores and supplies as would suffice during the continuance of the contest, or until we could obtain command of the sea. Assigning but a moderate limit to this period, the expense would yet be enormous. The fortifications, depots, and storehouses would necessarily be on the largest scale, and the cost of placing supplies there for five years would amount to nearly one hundred million dollars.

"In many respects, the cost during peace would be equivalent to that during war. The perishable character of many articles would render it perhaps impracticable to put provisions in depot for a such length of time; and, in any case, there would be deterioration amounting to some million dollars per year.

"These considerations, and others of a strictly military character, cause the Department to examine with interest all projects promising the accomplishment of a railroad communication between the navigable waters of the Mississippi and those of the Pacific ocean. As military operations depend in a greater degree upon rapidity and certainty of movement than upon any other circumstance, the introduction of railway transportation has greatly improved the means of defending our Atlantic and inland frontiers; and to give us a sense of security from attack upon the most exposed portion of our territory, it is requisite that the facility of railroad transportation should be extended to the Pacific coast. Were such a road completed, our Pacific coast, in lieu of being further removed

in time, and less accessible to us than to an enemy, would be brought within a few days of easy communication, and the cost of supplying an army there, instead of being many times greater to us than to him, would be about equal. We would be relieved of the necessity of accumulating large supplies on that coast, to waste, perhaps, through long years of peace; and we could feel entire confidence that, let war come when and with whom it may, before a hostile expedition could reach that exposed frontier, an ample force could be placed there to repel any attempt at invasion."

Sir, I can add little to such an argument; it is comprehensive and conclusive.

It is said that the country is now struggling for existence; that immense debts are being incurred; and that we cannot now go into further debt until the present difficulties have been overcome; and that even if the construction of the road were commenced now it could not be completed within the next ten years.

Sir, if the position I have assumed is correct, to wit, that this work is a military necessity, it is as properly the subject of immediate legislation as are our forts and sea-board defenses. It cannot be commenced too soon, and the length of time required to construct it should be the strongest argument in favor of immediate action. You may on this side be able to wait ten or twenty years without feeling its necessity. But, sir, we upon the other side will wait in silent suspense, in fear and trembling. Why should you hesitate longer to perform this great act of justice to your brethren of the Pacific? Can you afford to lose California and your Pacific possessions? Are they not worth the cost of a railroad? How will your money market endure the deprivation of our gold? How your manufactories sustain the loss of our trade, as they would with a change of tariff to suit foreign producers? Would not your debt be lightened by developing your intermediate Territories? If a war should come, the cost of keeping your Pacific States, even if you succeeded in the effort, which would be impossible, would amount to treble the cost of this road. *Is the empire we have founded on the Pacific not worth protection? If not, why was it established?*

It is said that the danger of a war with England is now past. Let us not deceive ourselves. The hostile feeling towards this country which seized upon the late trivial difficulty when we were in the midst of embarrassment and danger, and made it the occasion of a war, still exists; and I say to you here that the danger of a war is not past until the lion of England has become a lamb, incapable of giving, or we sunk so low that we are incapable of receiving, an insult.

Many obstacles which have heretofore delayed action on this measure are now removed. The factious and determined opposition of the Representatives from the Southern States is now withdrawn. The difficulty of settling upon routes does not now exist, for the question of a Southern route cannot enter into our discussions. The necessity of railroads for military purposes has been demonstrated by practical experience. The danger of a foreign war has aroused the public mind to the absolute necessity of a railroad to the Pacific. The late interference of the New Granadian authorities with the transit of our prisoners across the Isthmus of Panama

warns us of the insecurity of that route. The only objection which I hear urged is the inability of Government to assume new obligations, or to add to the present large debt incurred in quelling the rebellion.

Sir, the argument that this Government is ever too poor to do equal justice to all the members of its family is not a fair argument. But it can be shown clearly that this assumed additional debt will not become a burden upon the Treasury of the country. There are two methods by which Government can consistently lend its aid, and by which that aid will prove effectual, both of which contemplate a future reimbursement of the sums advanced ; while from the enhanced value of the lands along the line, the development of mineral wealth, and from the rapid settlement of the country, now a wilderness, through which the road will pass, the Government will prove a grainer in a business point of view.

The bill which I have had the honor to introduce in this House contemplates the issuance of United States bonds to be loaned to the company at a fixed amount per mile, being about one half the contemplated cost of the road, upon the completion of continuous sections of twenty-five and fifty miles ; also a grant of alternate sections of the public lands for six miles upon either side of the road.

Although I have long been in favor of a different plan or mode of granting aid, yet inasmuch as the scheme I have named appears to have been the one adopted by the committee at their last or Thirty-Sixth session, it having been thoroughly discussed and finally approved by the House, I felt almost instructed to conform to the thus expressed ideas of the House upon the subject, and accordingly introduced a bill in conformity thereto. Under that bill I think it can be successfully demonstrated that no great additional burden will be laid on the Treasury of the United States for many years to come.

As before stated, the bill provides that upon the completion of sections of a certain length, the United States shall issue their bonds at a certain rate per mile to the company ; also issue to them the lands appertaining to such completed section or division. At the rates proposed it is likely that the *total* amount of bonds issued will be about sixty millions of dollars. But it must be borne in mind that these bonds are not to be issued at once. At least one year after the passage of the bill will be consumed in making the necessary surveys, and in preparing for work ; and it will not be until at the expiration of the second year that any bonds will be called for. If we assume the length of the road to be two thousand miles, to be completed in ten years, this will require the completion of an average length of two hundred miles per year. If we assume the whole cost to be sixty millions, then there will be required the issuance of six millions of dollars per year — the interest on which, at six per cent., will be \$360,000 per year. At the expiration of the second year it is likely that an issue of six millions in bonds will be called for. But inasmuch as the interest is to be paid semi-annually, it follows that under the provisions of this bill, for a period of two and a half years after its passage, no payment of interest from the United States Treasury is required. The payment then becoming due will be \$180,000 ; and at the end of the third

year it will be an additional \$180,000. The total amount of payments required at the close of the *fifth* year, inclusive, will have been \$5,400,000, and the annual payment of interest on the completion of the road will be \$3,600,000. Are these the fearful expenditures that frighten gentlemen when they hear this subject mentioned? The bill further provides that these sums shall be repaid the Government in transportation of mails, military stores, troops, &c., and that Government may, in case of war, take possession of and use the road for its purposes. Even if it takes ten years to build the road, we do not wait so long for its benefits. *Every mile that is constructed bridges the gap between the two oceans, and adds new security to our Pacific possessions, by increasing the facilities and diminishing the cost of defending and supplying them.*

It is believed that the Government business, at the expiration of ten years, between the Atlantic States and Nebraska, Colorado, Utah, Nevada, Washington, Oregon, and California, in addition to the mails, will have increased sufficiently to compensate for this annual interest, while the legitimate business of the road ought to be of sufficient magnitude to afford a sinking fund for the repayment of the principal.

Under this arrangement, how can the United States become losers, or how can this grant operate as a burden on the Treasury? As security for the repayment of any funds loaned by the Government, the bonds operate as a first mortgage upon a property which will have cost double their amount.

In most of the details this bill is similar to the one passed by this House at the last session of the Thirty-Sixth Congress; which bill was so thoroughly discussed and examined by the House during that and the preceding session that I deem it unnecessary to enter into further explanations in regard to its details. Quite an important alteration, however, in regard to the rates of appropriation per mile upon the western end will be observed, which is thus explained.

It is well known that the surveys made by the Government engineers were not close railroad surveys, but barometrical reconnoissances, which, while affording data sufficiently accurate from which to deduce general results, do not furnish information of the character necessary to determine with accuracy the cost of a line over a difficult country. The estimates of distance and cost upon the central route entering California, including the passage of the Sierra Nevada Mountains, were made upon the line surveyed, by order of Government, by Lieutenant Beckwith, whose line crossed these mountains in the extreme northern part of the State, via the headwaters of the Sacramento.

Since that time reconnoissances have been made of several routes through central California, resulting in the discovery of an entirely new route across the Sierra Nevada mountains, upon which an accurate, scientific railroad survey has recently been made by T. D. Judah, Esq., an accomplished civil engineer, who has done more to advance the great Pacific railroad work by years of labor and devotion than any other man in the country. His surveys develop the fact that, with less maximum grades than those employed on the Baltimore and Ohio railroad, this route

effects a saving in distance of nearly two hundred miles, and a saving in cost of nearly fifteen millions of dollars — no mean items in reckoning the length and cost of a Pacific railroad.

From my personal knowledge of the manner in which those surveys were prosecuted, and the recognized ability and professional skill of the engineer, I place the utmost confidence in their results, and have therefore thought proper to avail myself of the estimates of cost of crossing the Sierra Nevadas as presented by the report of the engineer, in determining the amount of relative appropriations per mile across the Sierras to a connection with Lieutenant Beckwith's line at Lassen's Meadows or crossing of the Humboldt river. For the information of those who may feel interested in the matter, I will state that this report was printed by order of the House, and has been laid on the tables of members at the present session.

I have said that, in view of the previous action of this House, I felt instructed to offer a bill of the nature I have described ; yet there was another plan upon which the road might be successfully constructed, and my judgment has long since inclined me to favor a plan of Government guarantee as the surest and simplest plan of extending our aid. This plan, after mature deliberation by two of the greatest Powers of Europe — England and Russia — has been adopted by them in furtherance of the prosecution of a system of railroads in British India and in Russia, as the best system which could be devised for that purpose ; and in its admirable workings we may learn a lesson of wisdom which will prove of practical benefit to ourselves in determining our future course upon this subject.

The length of lines sanctioned by the guarantee of Government, up to 1858, in British India, was four thousand eight hundred and forty-seven miles, of which three thousand and thirty-eight miles were in the course of construction, and would be completed during the year 1862. The capital guarantied by Government was about two hundred millions of dollars, of which one half had then been fully paid up — in other words, the Government guarantied upon the entire cost of the roads, amounting to about two hundred millions of dollars, a per cent. profit. The theory of the guarantee is, that the lines will pay the per cent. guarantied. If they fail to be so profitable, the Government, under its guarantee, would make up the deficiency for a period of years ; thus inducing capitalists to embark in the enterprises. The balance the Government would supply would, of course, be charged to the railroad company, to be refunded in transportation of mails, troops, &c. The cost of the construction of those roads averages \$60,000 per mile.

From an interesting report to Parliament upon the construction of railways in India, made in 1859, it appears that seven different companies were engaged in constructing railroads in India, under the guarantee of the Government. They are enumerated as follows :

The East India Company, extending from Calcutta to Delhi, with a branch from Mirzapoor to the line of the Peninsula Company at Jubbulpore, the total length of which is fourteen hundred miles, and the cost of which, already completed to Patna, has been about sixty thousand dollars per mile. It is estimated to cost \$70,000,000 completed.

The East India Peninsula Company, from Bombay northerly to the East India line at Jubbulpore, and southerly to meet the Madras line at Bellary. This line was, at the time of the report, completed to Poonah. Its estimated cost is \$60,000,000.

The Madras Company, extending from Madras to Beypoor, on the Malabar coast; estimated cost \$30,000,000.

The Bombay, Paroda, and Central India line, extending from Bombay to Ahmedabad; costing \$10,000,000.

The Seinde and Punjab line, from Kurrachee to Kotree, and from Mooltan to Lahore; costing \$13,000,000.

The Bengal line, from Caleutta to Dacca, with a branch to Jessore; costing \$5,000,000.

The Great Southern Company, from Salem to Negapatam and Madura; costing \$10,000,000.

These seven lines alone, costing \$200,000,000, or twice the cost of the *Pacific railroad*, are at this moment nearly completed. There are projected in British India, at the present time, twelve thousand miles of railroad, which will cost \$600,000,000. These roads are spread like a network over India, and fully attest the foresight and sagacity of that Government in thus early recognizing the absolute necessity of railroad communication as a means of strengthening the power of the English Government in the exercise of her authority over these important possessions. Had a railroad been at the command of Havelock, how much earlier would Lucknow have been relieved from the distresses of that awful siege.

For the construction of all these lines it is stated that the Government guarantee has been given. The companies have the power of surrendering the works, at any time after their entire completion, upon giving six months' notice to the Government, which undertakes to pay the amount expended thereon by the companies. The Government has the power, within six months after the expiration of twenty-five or thirty years, of purchasing the railways at the mean market value in London of the shares during the three previous years. In case of a failure to complete these lines, or to work them satisfactorily, the Government is authorized to assume possession of the same, and repay within six months the sum expended.

The Russian Government has also adopted the same method of carrying into execution the grand system of railroad improvements projected in that empire. The building of these roads was undertaken by the society of the *Credit Mobilier*, which assumes the construction of about thirty-eight hundred *versts* — equal to twenty-seven hundred miles — of railroads. The “concession” or franchise is for eighty-five years; the capital of the company is 270,000,000 silver roubles, or about \$220,000,000; the issue of shares not to exceed that amount; a third of these shares are allotted to the Russian Government; the shares of the company are not to be quoted on the Bourse; the Government guarantees a minimum of five per cent. By means of these lines, Russia will have obtained the power to move her vast armies and their supplies, with the greatest rapidity, to her frontiers. Notwithstanding the immense debt created by the Crimean

war, the Russian Government did not falter in the prosecution of these immense works, well knowing that the protection of the extremities was as necessary to national honor and safety as that of the center of the empire. And let me tell gentlemen who fear to grapple with this question of a military road, which must be built to maintain the integrity of our country, and who fear the debt thereby incurred, that they are in the infancy of statesmanship, and unable to profit by the obvious lessons the powerful nations of Europe are teaching us. The same idle security and want of comprehension has left us without a Navy to encounter a maritime war, when Europe was expending vast sums upon iron-clad steamers and improved enginery of war, before which granite defences are as glass; and if there is not a change of sentiment, and some spirit infused into our counsels, some profit seized from the example of the world, posterity will have reason to reproach us that we allowed to slip from our grasp the noblest land the sun ever shone upon,—an empire capable of development surpassing thought,—a portion of our country that may be the center of the greatest power and civilization the world shall ever see.

Had these railways of Russia been completed before the Crimean war, the fate of that war would have been differently decided.

One distinguishing characteristic of this immense Russian grant for internal improvements, is, that commercial advantages are made only a secondary consideration, the acknowledged primary object being the construction of those roads for their importance as military roads. Thus, upon the line between St. Petersburg and Moscow, about four hundred miles in length, the convenience of the intermediate country was not taken into consideration. Without respect to intervening villages, towns, or cities, or districts, the road was built in almost a straight line, having upon its entire length only nineteen stations. All considerations of traffic were spurned; and the road was built at a cost scarcely exceeded by that of any other railroad, of equal length, in the world. It was laid out and superintended by military engineers, was constructed chiefly by military labor, and its workings are superintended by military officers.

If we can draw instruction from the experience of older nations as to the best mode of advancing the prosecution of this to us great undertaking, I respectfully submit if it is not the part of wisdom to give ear to the teachings of that experience, though it may come from a foreign country.

Sir, if fortunately I may be able by my efforts of this day to excite an active interest in this great and necessary military work, I shall have justified my consumption of the time of the committee. Commercial considerations I have not dwelt upon, although important. If the House wills to aid this grand national measure, I may by and by crave its indulgence in further discussion of details.

I have spoken from a full heart, and from long and anxious study; and I beg that this session may not pass away without the inauguration of a Pacific railroad upon one of the plans which I have presented, or some other that shall commend itself to the wisdom of the House.





